



Both challenges and successes in transportation led to the development in 2006 of a new coalition to organize a community approach to develop regionally significant transportation projects in the Grant County area of Central Washington.

Successful support by both the state and federal government of the Produce Railcar Pool program and inclusion of widening a portion of SR-17 in the Transportation Partnership fund revealed the prime movers of transportation progress and how projects get funded. Additional support from the Washington State Department of Transportation educated us in successful models of transportation coalitions elsewhere in the state.

Meetings of a small core group identified the agenda items and direction for a series of three Transportation Summits. The Summits brought together key members of local communities to hear reports on transportation initiatives currently underway, make connections with others with similar interests and at the last Summit, draw up a list of projects of greatest need.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Members from the 74 TransCo partners are in the process of mapping the 22 projects recorded at Transportation Summit III and preparing a timeline of funding opportunities. With this data we will be able to identify and pursue the specific projects that have the most imminent need, largest support and stand the greatest chances of being funded and successfully completed.

TRANSCO MISSION

Identify, prioritize, fund and build key transportation projects that contribute to the economic vitality and quality of life of our area.

Additionally, the new organization was asked to submit letters of support for two immediate transportation problems: full funding of the SR-17 project, which was threatened when increased costs brought project bids in over budget, and maintaining Essential Air Service support for Grant County International Airport. TransCo responded with letters to Governor Gregoire and Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell. SR-17 received the additional funds and the local air service received a postponement of elimination so alternatives could be explored. TransCo also supports full completion of the I-90 improvements on Snoqualmie Pass.

We recognize that a smoothly functioning transportation network, from the interstate highway system to city streets and county roads, is vital to the economic vitality of our communities. Additionally, increasing attention to the importance of a functioning rail system has validated a crying need long expressed by manufacturers and commodities for investment in our state, and indeed our national, railways. Effective barge traffic on the Columbia River and beneficial trails and walkways are not outside our vision and mission.

Unification and coordination of efforts will lead to greater access to government resources, better movement of people and goods throughout our region, and will benefit all jurisdictions in the Columbia Basin.